

## Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10  
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11  
HA-05 AID-05 IO-13 ACDA-12 COME-00 EB-08 FRB-03  
TRSE-00 XMB-02 OPIC-03 LAB-04 SIL-01 OMB-01 HEW-04  
AGRE-00 /129 W

-----075349 051329Z /41

P R 011905Z JUN 78

FM AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6915

INFO AMEMBASSY BRIDGETOWN

AMEMBASSY KINGSTON

AMEMBASSY PARAMARIBO

AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 GEORGETOWN 1771

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (TEXT)

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, GY

SUBJECT: BURNHAM'S PROPOSALS FOR NEW CONSTITUTION

1. GOVERNMENT OWNED GUYANA CHRONICLE OF MAY 31 HAS PUBLISHED  
"GUIDELINES FOR A NEW CONSTITUTION" PROPOSED BY THE RULING  
PEOPLE'S NATIONAL CONGRESS (PNC) PARTY AT AN EXTRAORDINARY  
MEETING OF THE PNC GENERAL COUNCIL ON MAY 27. THE "COOPERATIVE  
REPUBLIC OF GUYANA" WILL BE "AN INDIVISIBLE SECULAR DEMOCRATIC  
SOVEREIGN STATE IN THE COURSE OF TRANSITION FROM CAPITALISM TO  
SOCIALISM." PRINCIPAL FEATURES OF THE PROPOSED CONSTITUTION  
INCLUDE:

A. NATIONAL ASSEMBLY (PARLIAMENT) WILL BE EXPANDED BY TWELVE  
SEATS TO A TOTAL OF 65. THE PRESENT FIFTY-THREE SEATS WILL  
CONTINUE TO BE FILED BY MEMBERS ELECTED BY PROPORTIONAL  
REPRESENTATION (PR). TEN ADDITIONAL MEMBERS WILL BE ELECTED  
BY TEN REGIONAL COUNCILS, THEMSELVES ELECTED IN LOCAL  
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ELECTIONS AT THE SAME TIME AS PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS. FINAL  
TWO MEMBERS WILL BE ELECTED BY A CONGRESS OF DEMOCRATIC  
LTCAL ORGANS, CORRESPONDING ROUGHLY TO THE PRESENT GUYANA  
ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL AUTHORITIES (GALA).

B. AN EXECUTIVE PRESIDENT WILL COMBINE THE FUNCTIONS OF  
CHIEF OF STATE AND HEAD OF GOVERNMENT. THE GUIDELINES  
PROVIDE SIMPLY THAT "THE PRESIDENT WILL BE ELECTED BY

THE PEOPLE." (PRIME MINISTER BURNHAM HAS SAID IN HIS MAY 13 PRESS CONFERENCE, HOWEVER, THAT THE PRESIDENT WILL BE HEAD OF THE LIST OF THAT PARTY WHICH WINS THE LARGEST VOTE IN THE PARLIAMENTARY ELECTION. THE PRESIDENT MAY VETO LEGISLATION, BUT MAY BE OVERRIDDEN "BY A SPECIAL MAJORITY--SAY, TWO-THIRDS.")

C. THE PRESIDENT WILL APPOINT A FIRST VICE PRESIDENT AND OTHER VICE PRESIDENTS FROM AMONG HIS APPOINTED MINISTERS WHO, IN TURN, MAY EITHER BE MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT OR ELECTORS QUALIFIED FOR PARLIAMENTARY MEMBERSHIP. IN THE LATTER CASE, THE MINISTERS MAY PARTICIPATE IN PARLIAMENTARY PROCEEDINGS BUT MAY NOT VOTE. THE FIRST VICE PRESIDENT WILL BE THE PRIME MINISTER WHO, ALTHOUGH HE WILL NOT BE HEAD OF GOVERNMENT, WILL HAVE DAY TO DAY OPERATING RESPONSIBILITIES FOR THE GOVERNMENT AND WHO WILL PRESIDE OVER CABINET MEETINGS IN THE PRESIDENT'S ABSENCE.

D. THE NGL CONSTITUTION MAY BE AMENDED BY A SIMPLE MAJORITY IN PARLIAMENT FOR MATTERS OF ORDINARY IMPORTANCE AND BY A TWO-THIRDS MAJORITY FOR IMPORTANT MATTERS. A REFERENDUM MAY OR MAY NOT BE REQUIRED (PRESUMABLY AS DETERMINED BY THE PARLIAMENT) FOR IMPORTANT MATTERS. AMENDMENTS GOVERNING CERTAIN AREAS MUST BE APPROVED BY REFERENDUM, HOWEVER, INCLUDING THOSE DEALING WITH: THE NAME AND TERRITORY OF THE STATE AND THE PRINCIPLES THAT: SOVEREIGNTY DERIVES FROM THE PEOPLE; LAND BELONGS TO THE TILLER; EQUALITY OF WOMEN AND OF CHILDREN BORN WITHIN OR WITHOUT WEDLOCK; CONFIDENTIAL

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AND THE PRINCIPLE THAT LAWS MUST ONLY BE MADE BY THE ELECTED MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT. "ANY OTHER PROVISION" THAT IS DETERMINED BY THE DRAFTERS OF THE NEW CONSTITUTION TO BE OF SUFFICIENT IMPORTANCE MAY ALSO REQUIRE A REFERENDUM FOR AMENDMENT.

E. THE ECONOMIC SYSTEM WILL BE BASED ON:

- (1) "SOCIALIST OWNERSHIP OF MEANS OF PRODUCTION AND ABOLITION OF EXPLOITATION OF MAN BY MAN;"
- (2) "CO-OPERATIVES WILL BE THE CHIEF MEANS OF TRANSFORMING THE STATE INTO A SOCIALIST ONE;"
- (3) "PRIVATE ENTERPRISE WILL BE ALLOWED AS LONG AS IT SATISFIES SOCIAL NEEDS;"
- (4) LAND WILL GO TO THOSE WHO TILL IT;
- (5) PERSONAL PROPERTY (WHICH INCLUDES "DWELLING HOUSES, BANK ACCOUNTS, ETC.") AND INHERITANCE WILL BE ALLOWED;
- (6) CITIZENS HAVE A RIGHT AND A DUTY TO WORK.

2. PROVISIONS TO BE RETAINED FROM THE CURRENT CONSTITUTION INCLUDE: RECOGNITION OF FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS SUCH AS FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY, FREEDOM OF RELIGION, RIGHT TO PERSONAL LIBERTY, ETC., INCLUDING THE RIGHT OF POLITICAL PARTIES TO OPERATE, AS LONG AS THEY RESPECT THE DEMOCRATIC

FRAMEWORK OF THE STATE.

3. ELECTIONS ARE TO BE HELD AT FIVE YEAR INTERVALS.  
AN "UNOFFICIAL" GOVERNMENT SPOKESMAN HAS BEEN QUOTED  
IN THE PRESS AND ON THE RADIO THAT THE CONSTITUEN  
ASSEMBLY WILL REQUIRE 12-18 MONTHS TO DRAFT THE NEW  
CONSTITUTION AND THAT ELECTIONS WOULD BE HELD ABOUT  
THREE MONTHS THEREAFTER. THUS, SHOULD THE GOVERNMENT  
WIN THE JULY REFERENDUM, UNDER THIS FORMULA THERE WILL  
BE NO LECTIONS IN GUYANA BEFORE THE END OF 1979 OR FIRST  
QUARTER 1980 AT THE EARLIEST. (THE CURRENT CONSTITUTION  
CALLS FOR ELECTIONS BEFORE OCTOBER 26, 1978.)

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6916  
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AMEMBASSY PARAMARIBO  
AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 GEORGETOWN 1771

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (PARA 4. CORRECTED)

4. COMMENT: THE PNC GUIDELINES DEMONSTRATE LITTLE  
EVIDENCE OF LENGTHY THOUGHT BUT SUGGEST IN SEVERAL IN-  
STANCES HASTY PREPARATION DESIGNED TO COUNTER SEVERAL  
OF THE MOST FREQUENT AND VOCAL OPPOSITION CRITICISMS.  
--THE OPPOSITION SLOGAN THAT THE JULY REFERENDUM WILL  
BE "THE REFERENDUM TO END ALL REFERENDA" CAN NOW BE  
COUNTERED BY POINTING TO THE GUIDELINES' PROVISION FOR  
REFERENDA UNDER THE NEW CONSTITUTION, BUT ONLY IN NON-  
CONTROVERSIAL OR UNSPECIFIED AREAS.  
--THE PROPOSALS CALL FOR ELECTIONS, BUT THERE IS CONSIDER-  
ABLE SPECULATION THAT THE TWELVE NEW SEATS WILL BE SO

GERRYMANDERED AND JERRYRIGGED AS TO ASSURE AN INCREASE OR AT LEAST THE MAINTENANCE OF THE PNC'S ALREADY PREPONDERANT MAJORITY.

--ALTHOUGH THE GUIDELINES SUGGEST A FEW AREAS (ENDING WITH AN ET CETERA) IN WHICH PRIVATE PROPERTY WILL BE PRESERVED, THESE AREAS ARE NOT NEARLY AS BROAD AS THOSE  
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CLAIMED BY APOLOGISTS FOR THE REFERENDUM IN THE GOVERNMENT-OWNED PRESS, ONE OF WHOM, FOR EXAMPLE, INCLUDED FACTORIES IN HIS PUBLISHED DEFINITION OF PERSONAL PROPERTY.  
BUT THE MOST SIGNIFICANT ASPECT OF THE PNC "GUIDELINES FOR A NEW CONSTITUTION" IS THAT IT IS PRIME MINISTER AND LEADER FORBES BURNHAM'S FIRST WRITTEN PLAN OF ACTION FOR THE CONVERSION OF GUYANA TO A SOCIALIST SOCIETY. CERTAINLY THE ECONOMIC CRISIS, THE REQUIREMENT UNDER THE PRESENT CONSTITUTION THAT ELECTIONS BE HELD BY OCTOBER (WHICH COULD NOT BE EASILY WON HONESTLY), AND THE PUBLIC PROSPECT, HOWEVER ILLUSORY, OF ASSISTANCE FROM THE COMMUNIST COUNTRIES, --ALL HAVE CONTRIBUTED TO THE TIMING OF THE CALL FOR A NEW CONSTITUTION. WE ARE INCREASINGLY INCLINED TO BELIEVE NONETHELESS THAT BURNHAM'S ACTION PLAN FOR CONVERSION OF GUYANA TO A "COOPERATIVE SOCIALIST" STATE WHEREIN SOCIALIST ECONOMIC PRINCIPLES WILL BE WEIGHED MUCH MORE HEAVILY THAN TRADITIONAL WESTERN HUMAN LIBERTIES, REPRESENTS HIS PERSONAL IDEOLOGICAL CONVICTION AS WELL AS PRAGMATIC EXPEDIENCY ON THE PART OF THE PRIME MINISTER.  
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## Message Attributes

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